INDIANS ALWAYS PREY OF WHITES

Investigation Started by Senator Gore Opens Up Century's Record of Studied Robbery of Lands.

Helen Hunt's Fight For Aborigines Forgotten When Increasing Value of Broad Acres Is Seen.

WHEN Senator Gore of Oklahoma made the charges which brought in the name of Vice President Sherman he opened the story of the greatest muddle in all the muddled history of the white man's career of colonization.

When Helen Hunt, who fought for the Indian as no one else ever fought, published her "Century of Dishonor" the public conscience was stirred, and an effort was made to do the right thing by the man who, after all, was here first—to give him land and let him live on it. In short, we stopped being bad and began to be stupid.

For no sooner had the Indian been solemnly given the land, almost with tears of shamed apology, than we let it be taken away again, right and left, hit or miss. We forgot all about him as soon as he was duly a ward of the nation. We had said he was protected, and under the magnificent aegis of this declaration he was, of course, forever safe.

High Commissions Cause Row.

Then began the sort of thing that culminated when the McMurray firm announced that it would sell the Choctaw and Chickasaw lands for them, charging only 10 per cent of the price paid. The syndicate that wanted to buy was willing to pay $30,000,000 for the rich coal and asphalt lands that are said by some to be worth from $10,000,000 to $30,000,000 more, and for putting through this deal—so desirable, they explained, from the Indian point of view—the McMurray firm wanted only the fee of $3,000,000. Senator Gore objected, and hence the trouble. But there have been deals like this a-plenty and no Senator Gore to protest.

This same McMurray has had successful financial relations with the Indians in the past. He was, with four others, indicted for obtaining an enormous fee from the Five Nations in connection with the registration law some years ago. It is a long story, but one worth telling.

When the Five Nations were moved westward-ho to make room for a civilization that had no particular use for them they were paid for their lands and were given over 19,000,000 acres in what is now Oklahoma. Here they were to live as they wanted to live and hunt or farm, just as they liked, unmolested by the white man.

As we grew and waxed fat we extended anxious eyes toward Oklahoma. The Indian land was, unfortunately for them, very good land. No sooner did we grasp this fact than we felt we must take up the white man's burden.

Indians' Tribunals Abolished.

The red man had a certain government of his own, a sort of communal government, not undemocratic. He thought it pretty good. Anyway it suited him. But it stood in the way of "progress" and so it had to go, letting in the aforesaid progress with a flourish of lying, perjury, graft and other concomitants of civilization quite amazing to behold.

It was done in this fashion: Beginning in 1887, certain severalty acts were passed conferring citizenship on any Indian who would give up tribal life and take up land individually. In 1891 this offer was extended to the Five Nations in Oklahoma, and in 1893 the famous Dawes commission, headed by Senator Henry L. Dawes of Massachusetts, was appointed for the purpose of extinguishing the tribal titles to lands and allotting the same in severalty to members of the tribes.

It is not to be supposed that the Indians had anything to do with this arrangement. The white man took, along with his other burdens, that of deciding that the Indian should sell his land.

So it was sold. Some of it was to come into the market almost immediately and some within five years or so and some in twenty or more years, but practically all was to be sold in course of time. Over two-thirds of it has been disposed of now.

And the money? Well, the Indians are more likely to become charges on the state than to buy automobiles. There were only 100,000 or so of them, and over 12,000,000 acres of land have been sold, but the Indian didn't get the money.

One woman sold land worth in asphalt beds from $80,000 to $80,000. She was paid $1,100, but not all in cash—oh, no! For so large a price as that the purchaser explained that she must take part in the form of notes.

Blind Woman Cheated.

Another woman was blind and very, very old. Two white men explained to her that she was entitled to a pension by virtue of her late husband's service during the civil war. They presented a paper for her to sign, assuring her that she would get her pension on its receipt in Washington. She made her mark, her fingers guided by the men. The paper turned out to be a warranty deed for her farm. Both these cases were fought in court afterward.

The Dawes severalty act, arranging for the sale of the Indian lands, contemplated the prompt sale of some of the property, but considered that a good deal of it would be held for twenty or thirty years. The act was a piece of interference with the rights and desires of the Indians under any circumstances, but this provision was a redeeming point, and for nearly twenty years the sales proceeded with this limitation.

But it seemed too bad to leave the lands in the hands of the unprogressive for so long a time. Four years ago an amendment to the Dawes act removed all restrictions from the sale of the land and authorized the issuance of a fee simple patent to any allottee "competent and capable of managing his or her affairs."

The Indian office construed the meaning of this statute to be that if any Indian disposed of his land knowing he would not get it back again he was "competent and capable" within the meaning of the law.

Children Also Robbed.

There have been 24,000 cases in court in regard to the sale of these lands by persons "competent and capable." Not all of them concerned adults, for the case of the Indian child has been even harder than that of his parents. Many children of the Five Nations are very rich by inheritance. The tribes are dying, and those who survive have often much land coming to them. Here is scope for the "guardian" idea.

In 1896, after it was decided that the lands were to be divided, the commission announced that applications for rights in the apportionment of land should be made within thirty days and be passed upon within ninety days. That was fourteen years ago, and they have just wound up the matter. Indeed, there are some cases not yet settled.

Mansfield & McMurray of McAlester set forth to the Five Nations that somebody had to be employed to keep off the rolls the names of persons who were not really of their tribes. The Indians agreed—poor, muddled, badgered, harried tribes that wanted nothing but to be let alone.

Now, it was the business of the government to attend to this, and so Ethan Allan Hitchcock's secretary of the interior said afterward in no uncertain fashion, but the government didn't do anything about it, and Mansfield & McMurray proceeded to push people off the rolls. They got $10 a head for pushing, or something like that. Anyway, the bill amounted to $750,000.

Indians Pay All Bills.

There was a protest. McMurray and others were indicted, and then the indictments were dismissed. The Indians paid that bill, as they have paid various others.

Also they paid sometimes for getting on the rolls. Occasionally the fee was 50 per cent of all they had. Taking it by and large, there has seldom been so satisfactory a carnival from the grafter's point of view.

There was talk of reopening this rich view and looking over the rolls the other day, but even the Indians have learned the trick now, and they presented a petition saying that they have already spent over $1,000,000 defending themselves against fraudulent claims of citizenship in the Five Nations and they would prefer to have the matter rest as quietly as it can. They add, with some natural bitterness, that had the question of deciding on Indian blood been left to the Indian courts it would have been settled more swiftly and justly.

When the announcement was made that homesteads would be sold at one-half the assessed value of the land, two lots to each person, there was another rush to profit by the graft. The land had been Indian land, half a million acres in all, and it was offered on these terms to encourage civilization to take a nice long step and settle in Oklahoma.

Laws Easily Evaded.

Any man who wanted to speculate in land got a certain number of men at home, tramps or friends—anybody—to give him their power of attorney, then to Oklahoma without delay; two lots for him, please, and two lots for his friends whose power of attorney he showed.

Sometimes a man would get several hundred lots in this fashion. He would sell, and, if the graft was discovered, where was the grafter?

The commissioner of Indian affairs, Robert G. Valentine, put the case pithily the other day:

"It is possible to do only one of two things with the Indians—to exterminate them or to make them into citizens. Whichever we choose should be done in a businesslike way. If we choose extermination we should do it suddenly, painlessly and completely, but instead of frankly engaging in that course the country has set itself to make the Indians into citizens. It has no business to bungle this job as it is now doing any more than if the course of extermination were now to be decided on it would have any business to bungle that."

BESSIE'S FROG FARM

MISS JANET FITCH was an old maid when she legally adopted the little 10-year-old Bessie Havens, her niece, and she was older by nine years when one afternoon she said to the young lady:

"Well, dear, I think I have done my duty toward you thus far in the matter of education and accomplishments. You have been taught history, grammar, mathematics, algebra and other branches. You can sing and play. You know a little German and French. You can recite finely. You have composed essays. You have graduated with high honors."

"Thanks to you, dearest of aunts," replied Miss Bessie as she put her arms around the old lady and imprinted a loving kiss on her wrinkled cheek.

"And now—what, dear?"

"Why—why, I'll get married, won't I?"

"Yes, that generally follows, but I don't want it to follow too quickly after your graduation. I have been told—I have been told, Bessie, that there is a young doctor over at Somerset who seems deeply interested in you."

"Now, aunt, you know how folks gossip," chided the blushing girl.

"Just so, but I have made some quiet inquiries concerning this young doctor, and I find that he is highly spoken of. I don't know as I should seriously object to having a doctor in the family—not if he could relieve my headaches and didn't smell of iodine and carbolic acid all the time."

"Please don't tease me, aunt. You know I haven't seen Dr. Fancher half a dozen times in the last year, that is, it can't be over seven or eight times, and then he was always so busy."

"Y-e-s. We will put him aside for a moment, however, Bessie. I'm a practical woman. I've had to be. I have quite a little property, you know, and I have had to be practical to take care of it and to add to it. If I hadn't been practical we should have been sent to the poorhouse long ago. I believe a woman should have a good education, but she should also have business ability."

"Yes, aunt."

"If you should marry a young man who had little or no money—if you should marry a young doctor, for instance, the fact that you knew the difference between a leghorn hen and a scrub rooster would come in very handy."

"But I'm going to live and die an old maid," protested Bessie, as she fidgeted about.

"Y-e-s, but that doesn't alter my argument. I want you to become practical. I want to make a business woman of you. I want you to drop all other ideas for a year or so. Many a husband owes his success in business to his wife. Many a wife has been left a widow and has gotten along finely because she was practical.

"You can write a beautiful essay, but you don't know how many bushels of onions an acre of ground should yield. You can give a fine recitation, but you don't know the price of carrots. You can speak French after a fashion, but you can't tell what railroads passed dividends last year. I have heard it said that doctors were not practical business men, and therefore it behooves—"

The blushing niece put her hand over her aunt's mouth and held it there for half a minute. When it was removed the old lady said:

"Well, to come to the point, you know we have three acres of marsh land along the river. I have never seen my way to doing anything with it. The other day I came across an article in a newspaper that solved the problem. I asked our hired man about it, and he was enthusiastic at once. Bessie, I am going to run a dyke along the bank of the river and inclose that march and make a frog farm of it."

"Why, Auntie Fitch!"

"And I am going to put you in charge of that frog farm and make a business woman of you. In two years there won't be a windmill man in the state who can hold a candle to you in doing business. You will be right here under my eye and have the benefit of my years of experience."

"But you have never raised frogs," protested the appalled young lady. "And if you have a frog farm what are you going to do with the frogs? It isn't just to see them jump and hear them croak, is it?"

"Didn't I say you lacked practicability?" dryly replied the aunt. "My dear child, don't you know that frogs' legs are on the menu of every first-class restaurant and hotel in the big cities, and that they are a very costly dish. Men are employed to hunt for the frogs, but they can never catch enough to supply the demand.

"A genius out West got to thinking these things over, and the result was that he started a frog farm, and is now making several thousand dollars a year. He has his frogs right there. He can fill an order in an hour. They are no expense to him, and the profits are simply enormous.

"I have already given orders for the dyke to be constructed, and have engaged boys from the village to catch us the frogs to start our farm with. You must begin tomorrow to read up on the frog. You will find his career full of interest and adventure."

Miss Bessie did not rebel. On the contrary, after a few minutes' thought, she rather took to the idea. She had a dim idea that all doctors were naturalists, and that the young doctor at Somerset would be posted about bullfrogs.

She was doomed to be agreeably disappointed, however. Without much encouragement from her, and even before he had seen the marsh wherein the frogs were to dawdle away the days and bellow away the nights, a look of erudition came to his face and he began:

"The bullfrog belongs to the reptilian family. His hind legs were known as an article of diet a thousand years ago. He lives in lakes, ponds and mudholes. During the winter he hibernates; during the summer he cavorts around and believes that life is worth the living. The bullfrog's hearing is not very acute, but his keenness of vision makes up for it. He can spot a schoolboy with a stone in his hand 40 rods away."

"How interesting!" whispered Miss Bessie, with a shy glance.

"I am glad you called," added Miss Fitch, feeling a sudden balminess.

"The nature of the bullfrog is naturally retiring," continued the doctor. "It is retiring and also musical. Although created during a savage epoch in the history of the world, he has thus far failed to betray anything like ferocity in his conduct toward the human race. All efforts to connect him with the mysterious disappearance of certain small boys and girls have utterly failed. It is not known that he even defends himself when attacked. He is easily domesticated, and it is believed that the bullfrog has a grateful nature."

I'M GOING TO PUT YOU IN CHARGE OF THAT FROG FARM AND MAKE A BUSINESS WOMAN OF YOU.

"But as a commercial speculation?" suggested Miss Fitch, while Bessie wondered where the doctor could have picked up so much valuable information in his practice.

"Yes'm. I was coming to that. As long as frogs' legs are inquired for at Sherry's, Delmonico's, the Waldorf and other places of the kind, the want must be supplied. You must first catch your frog. If you have him penned up in a frog pasture, it is easier to catch him than if he was roaming over the country at large. In other words, if you have the frogs, you can fill the orders. Again, if you have the frogs the buyers must pay your own price or go without frogs' legs. As a speculation I do not think commercialism offers anything better."

"That's just what I've been contending," replied Miss Fitch with one of her rare smiles, "and I am glad to find myself corroborated. You will stay to dinner, of course."

The doctor stayed. He looked at the dyke and talked frog-lore. He looked at the marsh and talked more of it. He sat down with pencil and paper and figured out the profits of a frog farm, and after he had taken his leave the aunt blandly said to the niece:

"My dear, it does me good to meet a man so far above the common herd. I trust that we may have his valuable advice at every turn in this bullfrog business. I was so interested that I forgot to ask him what was good for a headache just over the eyes."

The dyke was finished and the farm started with about 200 frogs. This was in May. By the latter part of June, Miss Fitch estimated that the number of frogs had doubled. Neither Miss Bessie nor the doctor estimated. They announced that they should steer a conservative course. That is, one between the tadpole and the grown frog.

About the time the estimate was made trouble came from the village nearby. Those bullfrogs, no matter just what the number, began to make their presence known o'nights. They growled. They bellowed. They thundered. They began at sundown and never quit their job until sunrise. Complaints were made. Lawsuits were threatened. The ill were disturbed and the well made unhappy.

Miss Fitch had sentiment, but this was a commercial speculation, and she had no patience with the kickers. It was in August that she received her first order for frogs' legs, and it made her gasp, and opened Bessie's eyes to the practicality of frog farming. The order was for 300 dozen pairs of legs.

The hired man was sent out with two assistants to run down the unsuspecting frogs. The assistants were to be paid at the rate of $2 a day. After three days of wading and trailing four blinking and puzzled bullfrogs were brought in. The doctor advised a boat and nets. Result: Six dollars more paid out for wages and two more blinking frogs.

Then the kicking grew more intense. The doctor recommended dignified silence. Result: Five lawsuits were begun in one day. There wasn't any question about there being a frog farm and there wasn't any question about the songs and shouts and growls and bellowings of hundreds of frogs at night, but the question was how to catch them by day.

"The bullfrog," said Dr. Fancher, "belongs to the reptilian family. He has less brains than the cloth, but—"

And there he stuck and the number of lawsuits was increased by two and the mortal enemies by a dozen. Again the boat was sent out, only to return frogless. Night after night the reptilian family sent forth notes of rejoicing and defiance.

About the first of September the doctor arrived one afternoon to find Miss Fitch wearing a look of defeat and Bessie sobbing in her handkerchief. Had the frog-cholera depopulated the marsh? Had the bottom dropped out and let the reptiles through into China? Had—had—?

But before he could shiver again Miss Fitch assumed a heroic pose and dramatically exclaimed:

"'Tis done! They have cut the dyke and every last bullfrog has gone sailing down the river! We have no longer a frog farm! We have no longer—longer—"

"But you have me," replied the doctor, as he went over and took his stand beside Bessie.

And they have him yet, but instead of growing frogs on the marsh it has been drained and trained to grow onions and celery, which can be caught and shipped the same day that an order is received.